

A Change of Scene by deandratb

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Summary:

Prompt fic; while they're chaperoning the boys at a science fair across the country, jetlag intervenes. *It wasn't a dynamic she would have ever expected to work--her sensitive little boy and the beer-drinking, back-alley-brawling chief of police. But somehow it did.*

A Change of Scene

Author's Note:

For [lorelaisrorys](#) and [notaslongasthat](#). Prompt: **jetlagged and being lazy in bed together**

Earlier disclaimer still applies: I haven't seen S2 yet, so if anything is not canon-compliant, it's purely by accident and I'm unaware of it.

It was an accident of fate, really.

Hopper volunteered to chaperone Will and Mike for the national trip they'd earned thanks to their science fair showing. Mike's mom had her hands full with Holly, and his dad claimed he couldn't be spared from work--or as Mike put it with a shrug, "he just doesn't get it."

And Joyce, Hopper knew, would have a hell of a time getting the days off, which was why she'd never gone to any of Will's other out-of-state competitions.

Unlike her, he could make room in his schedule...and he'd never been to Seattle before. Considering he wouldn't have to cover his hotel or travel expenses, just pay for food and sightseeing--not that he planned to do much of that--it was a no-brainer. The kids deserved a break.

Joyce deserved one, too. But he had no say in that. All he could do was help out a little, and the bewildered but grateful look she gave him when he told her was really something.

"You're--you're serious? You want to take the boys to the West Coast?"

"Yeah. I've got vacation days saved up, and they need somebody looking after them. I mean, I know Clarke will be there, and he can keep an eye on them at the fair...but I figure, this way you won't have to--"

Worry, Hopper finishes in his mind, when Joyce cuts him off with a

hard, impulsive hug.

“Thank you. I-I’d really appreciate that, actually.”

“Honey,” she added over Hop’s shoulder at Will, “you know I would take you if I could, you know I want to see what you’re doing. I just--”

“Can’t,” Will agreed. “Yeah, Mom, I know. It’s okay. He’ll do it.”

Her son grinned up at Hopper, and Joyce had to remind herself not to look as astonished as she still was by the bond that had formed between them. In the months since Will’s return, since Hop literally brought Will back to life, they’d started spending time together.

“Boy’s nights,” Hopper had called them with a wink in her direction, making her stomach hurt with the reminder of how much Will lacked in father figures. Jonathan was the best big brother he could possibly be, but he deserved a life of his own. So when Hop started watching Will a couple evenings a week, she just prayed it would be good for him.

It wasn’t a dynamic she would have ever expected to work--her sensitive little boy and the beer-drinking, back-alley-brawling chief of police. But somehow it did.

The way Will talked about him made her reevaluate Hopper . There were levels there she’d never seen...maybe ones she shouldn’t be so surprised by. He was a father once, after all.

He must have been a great one.

“I’ll give you money for their meals next week,” Joyce told him as she stopped hugging and stepped back.

“Don’t worry about it.”

He held up a hand when she started to protest. “Joyce. Keep your money.” *I don’t need it*, he told her with his eyes. *Don’t fight me on this.*

“All right.” She hugged herself a little as she nodded. “Will,

sweetheart, go put your books away. Then you can have a snack.”

“Okay.”

Hopper watched him go, aware that she’d gotten him out of the way for a reason. “What’s up?”

“I...I was really worried,” she confessed, stepping closer so she could speak in a near-whisper. “I know it’s been months, and he’s home, and he’s fine, but Seattle’s so--so far from us, and it kills me that I won’t be there.”

“Hey.” He reached out to rest his hand on her arm, aware that Will might be back any moment. “I get it. I really do. You know I’ll keep him safe.”

“I do. Hop...I trust you.” *Please don’t make me regret it*, she didn’t have to add. He heard it anyway.

Will invited him to dinner, without asking his mom first, which made Hopper smile, but he declined. Being there for the kid, telling him stories and giving him advice, had brought some color back into the life he’d all but given up on after Sara died. But there were lines he needed not to cross, and letting himself get pulled into Will’s family...letting himself get any closer to Joyce...was the most important one.

So it had to be fate, that put Donald in such a good mood one Wednesday that Joyce risked asking for the time off--and got it.

“My mom’s going to be my chaperone,” Will told him two weeks before the trip. “But you’ll still take Mike, right?”

“What, she’s not gonna take him too?” He couldn’t believe his bad luck. Well, maybe he could believe it, but he didn’t have to like it. If Joyce could take Will after all, she could take Mike too, and Hopper had actually been looking forward to going.

“No. She said looking after me would be a full-time job.” He rolled his eyes. Her over-protectiveness had gone from comforting to annoying right around the time he realized he was never going to be allowed to ride his bike alone ever again. There was careful and then

there was being a prison warden--now hanging out with the Chief was the only time he felt a little free.

Hopper didn't stare at him like he was going to flicker out of existence any second. He didn't have to watch his language, cuz the Chief's was worse...and after the Upside Down, Hopper had decided that nothing in a movie could scare Will more than his own life, so he let him watch anything he wanted. Will was careful not to let his mom find out about that part.

"So, you'll bring Mike?" He asked again. "Otherwise he can't go. And he's got to come. It wouldn't be fair if I went and he didn't. We wouldn't even have an entry if it weren't for him!"

"Yeah, yeah, I'll take him." Hopper laughed. "Calm down."

After Will went home, he was left wishing he could take his own advice. This school-sponsored trip was supposed to be a chance to kick back, in between nights spent keeping the boys out of trouble.

Somehow he had a feeling that with Joyce there, he wouldn't do much kicking back.

Author's Note:

Fic title from "New Dawn Fades" by Joy Division. All chapter titles from "Atmosphere" by Joy Division.